

You Can't Repeal the Law of Unintended Consequences

Mike Vanderboegh

Dear Ben,

I want to say how refreshing your New Republic article of 19 March was for its intellectual honesty. After three decades of my arguing the originalist position of the 2nd Amendment with every sort of hoplophobe known to mankind, your collectivist "by any means necessary" proposal strips the self-deception and cant away from the anti-gun position. Still, even if you are successful in advancing it, your proposal will come apart in the real world when it smacks into the one law that cannot be repealed: the Law of Unintended Consequences.

Some years back, I was the designated "gun-nut goat" on a public forum panel discussing "gun violence." It was held in Birmingham, Alabama at Children's Hospital. As I was placing pro-2nd Amendment literature on the seats before the event, a child psychiatrist (so identified by the name badge on his white coat) came up to me, looked at the leaflets and said, with a smile and with what he mistook to be bravery, "You know, I think ALL guns should be banned."

I smiled back and replied, "Really? Do you own a gun?"

He was taken aback. "Well, NO," he said, with all the fear and loathing of Dracula confronted by a Crucifix with wolf's bane garlands.

"Well, how do you propose to get mine then?"

He paused, then said, "Well, we'll pass a law and you'll have to turn them in to the government."

I laughed. "Wrong, sport. Let me tell you how that would work. If you want my gun, you're going to have to kill me to get it. Not only that, but you're going to have to kill my son, my brother and all our friends. And if even ten percent of American gunowners feel the way we do, you're going to have to kill upwards of eight and a half million people, and that doesn't count all the anti-freedom pukers like you that we'll kill in righteous self-defense before we meet our Maker, and we intend to make that MORE than a one to one ratio. So you've got to ask yourself, sport: Is it worth it?"

I was still smiling, he wasn't. "Wuh, wuh, well," he stammered, "you're PARANOID."

I laughed again. "OK," I said agreeably, "let's admit that you're the expert in that field and say that you're right. Let's say I am paranoid." And here, I opened my eyes wide, began to edge forward and dropped my voice an octave so the next words came out most sinisterly. "Let's say I'm crazy."

He involuntarily backed up. I winked at him and finished, "That just complicates your problem, doesn't it?" He was so plainly frightened that I busted out laughing and ruined the effect. He was in full reverse gear when I called after him.

"Just do me one favor, sport. If you want my gun, you come get it. Don't send someone else's son or daughter in federal service. YOU come get it." I winked at him again. "And, hey, I might even give it to you after I unload it."

It turned out that he also was on the panel. He waited until I took a seat and then found a chair as far away from me as he could get.

I have found over the years that modern day so-called liberals (who bear little resemblance intellectually to their claimed classical liberal ancestors) lack the courage of their convictions. There is no principle so dear that they are willing to personally suffer for, let alone die for. Government, blessed government, is their idol. If they are aggrieved, oppressed, or merely imagine that they are oppressed, it is to government that they turn. There hasn't been a liberal willing to die for his principles since the Civil Rights movement. They are more than willing to dispatch the men and women of government to die in their place, however. But, and I think this is more dangerous to the country, they also extrapolate from their own cowardice and believe that all people (even those who disagree with them) will, in the end, do what they're told by Government.

I have no doubt, Ben, that you have been inundated with all manner of disputatious email, some likely obscene and/or incoherent with anger. The passion this issue excites is understandable, touching as it does upon the bedrock of the Founder's Republic and the future of our children's liberty. But beyond the sneering and the anger, no matter how contemptible and silly it may seem to you, these people, MY people, the people who believe in the Founder's Republic and the plain language of the Constitution, ARE willing to die for their principles. And a man who is willing to die for his country is most often willing to kill for it too.

This was the lesson of the Deacons for Defense and Justice in the 60s and 70s. The Klan (and the local and state governments controlled by them) had no problem intimidating and killing black folks who practiced "non-violence" until those non-violent protesters were protected by the guns of the Deacons. In addition, the federal government did not get actively involved in insisting that the civil rights laws be enforced until the prospect of civil war loomed as black men, veterans mostly, began to arm themselves and train under the rubric of the Deacons for Defense and Justice.

You know, government isn't guaranteed to always be on your side, Ben. Even so-called "liberals" have need of firearms. Absent firearms, and the will to use them, you're all just fodder for the next boxcars which convey you to a place with a sign that says "Arbeit Macht Frei."

But I am not angry with you. As I said, I appreciate your candor. But you must understand that the Law of Unintended Consequences cannot be repealed. And you can be tried, convicted and sentenced by it, both in real time and in the judgment of history. By once again reminding gunnies of the threat your beliefs pose to their liberties, you have no doubt motivated more than a few of them to go out and buy more guns and ammunition. Do you suppose that they are doing this in anticipation of turning them in when you're successful in repealing the 2nd Amendment? A recent history lesson is appropriate here.

From the time the so-called "Assault Weapons Ban" was first proposed until it went into effect, something like 6 million semi-automatic rifles of military type (mostly SKS's and AK-47 clones) were imported into this country and sold. With them came billions upon billions of rounds of 7.62x39mm ammunition. That was more rifles of those types than had been sold in the previous twenty years! This was in defiance of the intent of the ban. It was in full expectation that the next law was to be one of confiscation. The Law of Unintended Consequences was in full swing then, and finally even the Clintonistas recognized that these millions of rifles and billions of rounds of ammunition were not being purchased to turn in to them, but to turn ON them if they became just a little more grasping.

So, I say with all seriousness, yet happily: Be careful what you wish for, Ben. You may get it. The Law of Unintended Consequences guarantees it.

Mike Vanderboegh
PO Box 926
Pinson, AL 31526
GeorgeMason1776ATaol.com